

General Grant House

HABS-NJ-320 ✓

309 Wood Street

Burlington City, Burlington County, New Jersey

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3-BURL
18-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, A.I.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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General Grant House
309 Wood Street
Burlington City, Burlington County, New Jersey

Owner: Olin M. Slack

Date of Erection: After 1813

Architect:

Builder: (Probable) John Wilson

Present Condition: Good

Number of Stories: Two

Materials of Construction: Foundation - stone

Exterior walls - brick,
stuccoed; frame addition
in the rear

Interior walls - plaster

Inside chimneys

Roof - flat

Historical Data:

According to the records available, the land upon which this house stands was conveyed in 1784 by Samuel Noble and his wife Lydia to Hezekiah Williams. In 1795 Abbott Williams sold to Micajah and Charles Ellis. There are three transfers recorded between members of the Ellis family, and then finally in 1813 a lot was sold by Charles Ellis to John Wilson.

John Wilson left the property by will to Mary Ann Mc Clintock, his daughter. There is recorded on April 8, 1837 a sale by this daughter and her husband to Abraham Brown. In the will of John Wilson a house is described as being on the property. It is assumed, therefore, that John Wilson was the builder and that the house must have been built sometime after he bought the lot on December 30, 1813.

The chief interest in the house lies in the fact that it was for sometime the residence of Ulysses S. Grant. Grant lived there during the time the Barclay family owned the property.

According to Schermerhorn, the Grants came to Burlington at the recommendation of Captain Knowlton. Captain Knowlton was a retired army officer who had been an instructor at West Point when Grant was a cadet there. Schermerhorn places the date as September 1864. However, Jesse Grant in his memoirs says the Grants settled in Burlington after the Battle of Missionary Ridge which was at the end of 1863. He further says his two brothers attended school in Burlington. The youngest of the Grants did not come to Burlington at once, but was apparently at camp with his father. Schermerhorn further states that Grant was calling upon Captain Knowlton when he received the news of the assassination of President Lincoln. However, in his Personal Memoirs Grant has the following to say:

"But by the fourteenth (April 1865) I was pretty well through with this work, so as to be able to visit my children, who were then in Burlington, New Jersey, attending school. Mrs. Grant was with me in Washington at the time, and we were invited by President and Mrs. Lincoln to accompany them to the theater on the evening of that day. I replied to the President's verbal invitation to the effect, that if we were in the city we would take great pleasure in accompanying

them; but that I was very anxious to get away and visit my children, and if I could get through my work during the day I should do so. I did get through and started by the evening train on the fourteenth, sending Mr. Lincoln word, of course, that I would not be at the theater.

"At that time the railroad to New York entered Philadelphia at Broad Street; passengers were conveyed in ambulances to the Delaware River, and then ferried to Camden, at which point they took the cars again. When I reached the ferry, on the east side of the City of Philadelphia, I found people awaiting my arrival there; and also dispatches informing me of the assassination of the President and Mr. Seward, and of the probable assassination of the Vice President, Mr. Johnson, and requesting my immediate return.

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"I immediately arranged for getting a train to take me back to Washington City, but Mrs. Grant was with me; it was after midnight and Burlington was but an hour away. Finding that I could accompany her to our house and return about as soon as they would be ready to take me from the Philadelphia station, I went up with her and returned immediately by the same special train."

It would seem from the testimony of the Grants that Schermerhorn's account of the Grants stay in Burlington is to be questioned.

There are four transfers recorded from the time the property left the Barclay family in 1874 until the present owner, Olin M. Slack, came into possession in 1925.

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Search of Burlington County records by
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